

in the economy.¹⁸ Wilmington's immigrant population was the highest in the state throughout the nineteenth century due to a constant influx of foreign immigrants. With a relatively large immigrant population, many who arrived in Wilmington formed their own social frameworks for sharing and maintaining their European cultural roots.¹⁹

In descending order, the next class to be found in the city was the white working class. This level of white society was multifaceted but shared a common bond of being excluded from the highest levels of society because they lacked wealth or status. Some working-class whites in Wilmington could earn a comfortable living for their families whereas others lived at the poverty level. Before the war, white laborers competed with African Americans, both slave and free.²⁰ Because of limited options in town, men supplemented their incomes through rural hunting, fishing, and tapping pine trees to send tar, pitch, and turpentine into the city for shipment. The working class formed the largest group of whites in the city, and the category included all types of workers, from skilled artisans to unskilled day laborers. These men reflected the larger view of the South in that they harbored contempt towards blacks, slave and free, based on the economics of the labor system in which they lived.²¹ It was reported in

September 1865 by a northern journalist that white North Carolinians, regardless of class or political slant, "unaffectedly and heartily do despise the negro."²² It was observed by the upper class elites that some whites refused to work as carpenters and masons, professions traditionally dominated by enslaved and free black artisans in Wilmington, because they believed the work to be beneath them.²³

properties that they did not own. Upper- and lower-class whites, whose traditions were grounded in respect of each other's property rights, disliked what they perceived as disrespect for white property. However, most blacks emerging from slavery were propertyless and did not possess the same concepts of ownership. Since slaves had no such property-owning traditions, they were simply practicing the same sort of agricultural dependence known to them before slavery's end, and some even harbored ideas that the property they worked on their old masters' farms belonged to them. Furthermore, John Hope Franklin points out that free artisans and skilled workers were often targets of organized action, to the point of using the courts to prevent other whites from hiring free black artisans. Railroads were among the larger slaveholding entities in North Carolina prior to the war. Most of the North Carolina Railroad's employees were enslaved, removing potentially lucrative and stable jobs from the white workers' market. White railroad laborers were paid low wages, had little job security and were the first employees to be laid off. Further, historian John Haley concluded that "the contempt whites had for blacks manifested itself in negative attitudes" regarding black "efficiency, character, and intelligence." Evans, *Ballots and Fence Rails*, 53-54, 74; Dylan Penningroth, *The Claims of Kinfolk: African American Property and Community in the Nineteenth Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 130-161; Franklin, *Free Negro in North Carolina*, 136-141; Allen Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad, 1849-1871, and the Modernization of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 62-69; John Haley, *Charles N. Hunter and Race Relations in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 4.

²² Haley, *Charles N. Hunter*, 4, 12.

²³ Bellamy, *Memoirs of an Octogenarian*, 8.

Bellamy's view of white artisans is somewhat skewed since modern research has shown that many whites in the city were working in building trades.

¹⁸ Elizabeth B. McKoy, *Wilmington Block by Block*, 134-135.

¹⁹ Primary among social organizations for German immigrants were local churches. For example because of the large number of German immigrants who arrived in Wilmington in the 1840s and 50s, the North Carolina Lutheran Synod established a mission there in 1858. A significant number of Jewish residents of German origin also lived in the city and helped to organize the state's first synagogue. Wrenn, *Wilmington, NC*, 117-119, 217-218; Evans, *Ballots and Fence Rails*, 123.

²⁰ Evans, *Ballots and Fence Rails*, 21.

²¹ One facet of racial disgust came to the fore when, during the early phases of Reconstruction, blacks made use of agricultural farmland or timber